

["I's Weak an' Weary"]

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Week ending Aug. 18, 1939.

LIFE STORIES SERIES.

Isaac Grove, Retired Negro

Farmer, Hillsdale Road, Cottage Hill Ala. Mobile Co.

Ila B. Prine, Writer, Mobile, Ala. ISAAC GROVE, RETIRED NEGRO FARMER. "I's WEAK AN' WEARY"

"Jes a minnit, Miss, I'll git right up and talk to you[.?]"

Isaac sounded as tho though it was an effort to get out of bed and open the door, as grunts came from the room.

When the door opened and he stepped out, it gave you the impression that an old prophet had come back in the form of a negro.

He is six feet tall, with broad shoulders that are very erect for a man eighty years old. His close-cropped hair and sparse beard was were snowy white. His clothes showed signs of long wear, especially the thin faded blue shirt. The brown trousers were held loosely upon him with by suspenders that had been mended with strings , and his feet were bare. He stood with a [?] Questioning expression on his face, and he hesitated before speaking.

" You will You'll have to excuse me, Miss," he apologized, "I neber gits up early any more , because cause I'm gittin' so that I can't hardly see. I'se I's nearly blind, and I'm I's too old to work, so I jes ' stays in bed unless somebody comes and calls me.

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"You see I'se I's been livin' in dis section of de country ever since two years after atter de Surrender s'render . I wuz six years old when my Ma and Pa brung me here. Dere wuz five of us chillun, two girls and three boys. Dey's all dead now 'cept me and one ob de boys, and an' I don't know where he is. He strayed off some place an' I ain't got no record of him.

" yes'm Yes'm, it gits pretty lonely here by myself, but de Lord has been good to me. I'se I's had good health all my life until not long ago I wuz a pullin' on a vine and it broke an' I fell against 'against a stump an' broke two or three of my ribs. Since den I'se I's got rheumatism and 2 I gets weak spells.

"I sometimes wonders how I does manage, but God's got a few christian people left in dis world, and some of dem comes and brings me something somethin' to eat. You take not long ago, I had I'd been up to the de store to git a little kerosene, and de man what lives over yonder called to me and said, 'wait a minnit minute [.,?]. In a little while here come aa child bringing me a bucket wid some grub in it. Some church woman had sent it by him. Dere wuz a piece of meat in it, as well as cooked things, an' dat is dat's de only reason I'se I's got any meat now.

"But I does know that there is dat dere's as much difference in people as dere is in chalk and cheese. For you take dat boy of mine, he's de only one left out of de seven chillun chillun me and de old woman had. One Sunday when dey had de big baptizing three months ago, I asked him for a quarter, he said 'I'll give it to you after atter while. I'll come by your house after atter de baptising baptisin'. Dat boy ain't been by here, nor I ain't seed him until 'til de other day, when de association 'sociation had dere de big turnout. He aint neber give me dat quarter, and he had it de afternoon I asked him for one. Jes ' to think how I worked to take care of them him , too. If I had I'd saved de money I've I's made on dis place, instead 'stead of letting lettin' them run through with it, I wouldn't be poor now, 'cause I've I's made plenty on dis place. I used to haul some good stuff from under dis hill. I remembers 'members one load of 'taters and beans, I got [?] eighty dollars for fer it. Law, yes, I'se I's raised stuff on de ten acres I cultivated, course I had fifteen all together, but

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only had ten fenced. It ain't fenced now, tho though. Folk's kept a stealing de posts and lumber for stove wood, until there dere ain't a one left. Den dey warn't satisfied 3 wid dat; dey stole my chickens, and finally , toted off my chicken house.

"My first house where we lived wuz down dere under de hill, where you see dem big oaks trees. It got [?] bad , and de old woman wanted a bungalow built up here on de hill, so seventeen years ago I started dis house for her, but never did git it finished before 'fore she died thirteen years ago. It wuz a strange thing how she wuz taken. She hadn't been feelin' rail good for sometime, but wuz [able?] able to help in the de field. She had a washin' she always done on Mondays, den she helped me in de field 'til Friday when she ironed. " Dis Friday I carried de clothes as I always allus did. That Dat night during the night sometime she got up and fell in the de floor. When she got back in de bed she said she wuz all right. Next day she seemed to feel bad , and an' I watched her all day , but didn't say nothin'. Sometime durin' de night I heard my old mule scufflin' in de barn and I went out to see about 'bout him, and while I wuz out dere I heard her fall again. So I hurried in de house and found she had she'd fallen fell and an' pushed de window open, but had crawled in de bed by de time I got to her. I told her den not to try to git up any more by herself no matter where I wuz, call me. But she didn't say nothin.' " Next ,morning mornin' she warn't able to git up, and by afternoon I noticed her tongue wuz gittin' thick, and heavy. So I said to her , "Ain't you seed nothin' this week?" and she said 'No.' So I asked her if de Lord seed fit to take her, wuz she ready to die? She told tol' me, 'You know I'se I's ready. I'se I's repented and 'pented an' been saved a long time ago; and you know she never spoke again until 'til the de following Wednesday morning when it wuz jes a crackin' day; she jus shouted herself away. Lord , 4 that dat wuz a good woman. She had She'd been a member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church for years, and an' she was also a member of de Starlight Hall. De Hall is an a association 'socation what takes care of the de sick and burries buries de dead. I'se I's been a member of it until 'til I got where I couldn't keep up my sick [benefit?] fees. Dey told tol' me that dey would dey'd bury me for

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what I'se I's all ready paid in, but I jes' has to depend 'pend on de good christian people to help me when I gits sick.

"I sometimes think thinks when I gits hongry, an' especially specially after [atter?] the de way my boy acted, I wish I could die. If God don't care for me, the de sooner and the de quicker I wants to go, for I knows he's ready for me. [? long] Long as he wants me to stay here, he's go'na give me food.

"You know, Miss Missie I stands for what is what's right , and I don't believe in all dis dancin' and frolicking frolickin', an' dat's de reason [?] my own boy treats me bad. Dey is Dey's all de time havin' dese wild dances and parties. Dat boy has got eleven 'leven chillun and dey is bad. One of his boys, my own grandson , robbed me here about 'bout two years ago. I wuz gittin' a little help from de Government, and I had three dollars and ten cents in my pocket. De wey dey knowed it wuz, I went up to de store and I'm so blind I can't hardly see, so I asked him to take a dollar and buy me some coffee, so dey seed me wid dat money. " Dat night I took off my pants and hung dem on de bed post. When I gits on my back I snores loud, and an' dey could hear me, so dey work at my door and gits it open and takes my pocket book, and when I wakes , my axe wuz lyin' across 'cross my front door. I know dey had it to hit me wid, if I had I'd waked up. But you see , God didn't suffer me to wake [?] 'til de next mornin'. I know God had a hand in caring for me, 5 'cause any other time I would have I'd a heard them 'em , because 'cause nobody can put dere foot on dat step 'less [?] I hear them 'em . " But both of dem boys has paid for dere meanness; for Tunstall, my grandson wuz sent up for eighteen months for stealin' a cow from de woman what raised him. He even called de woman mamma, den stole her cow. De other boy that dat wuz with him is now serving servin' three years for stealin' another cow by himself hisself . So you see, folks thinks they can git away with their meanness, but God sho' will overtake them [everytime?] 'em . He settles wid them 'em .

"Jes ' like a fellow name Ed Seifert what has lived here close by me all my life. Me and him both farmed , and an' I always allus had plenty tools, and when Ed would need anything I

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loaned it to him. I have I's loaned him as much as ten dollars at a time, when he needed money. Well, a few years ago Ed bought hisself a cultivator , and an' mine wuz [work?] worE out, so I saw him one day, and an' I said, 'Ed, I wants [wnts?] to borry your cultivator tomorrow if you ain't usin' it.' He said, 'send over tomorrow and git it[' ,?] so So de next morning mornin' my mind said don't send, go yourself yo' self, so I went; and when I got dere he said: 'You can't git it.' Welln Well, I jes ' looked at him in 'stonishment, because 'cause to think of all the tools I had lent him, and even let him have money several times, I jes ' couldn't help but say, 'Well, what do you know about that dat ?' But I comes come on home, and an' I didn't feel good towards t'wards Ed for a long time. But one day I saw seed him on de streets in Mobile, and I went up to him , and say, ' Ed , I don't feel jes ' right towards t'wards you 'bout de way you treated me 'bout dat cultivator ? After Atter that dat , de bad feelin' left me and Ed would Ed'd come over to my place[.?] [In?] fact fac' , he wuz here on de Sunday he died, he and some other mens come to see me, and Ed set on de bed by me. He left after atter a little while and went to his mother-in-law's 6 house, and an' dropped drApped dead face forward down`ard on de ground.

"Well, ' tain't no use thinkin' 'bout all that dat now, for its all past pas' and gone. But those [dem?] things will things'll come back to you sometimes, When you gits to thinkin' of the past de pas' . That Dat reminds me of a strange thing that dat heppened to me years ago. One day dis same Ed Seifert I'se I's been talkin' 'bout and I an' me wuz a-comin' through de woods where we had we'd been chipping chippin' boxes for turpentine. Dis has been a long time ago, and night overtook us on de way home. Me and Ed had an' Ed'd been talkin' about sperits, when all of a sudden one of dem come up behind behin' us. We both heard it and an' stopped, and an' when we stopped she stopped. You know long years ago women folks wore big skirts wid a heap of [starthed?] starched clothes under dem. Well, dis sperit sounded jes ' like a woman wid starched skirts walking fast, and every step we'd take, she'd take a step[,?] hey Dey would sound zum, sum, zum, zum[.?] We never said a word 'til we got home, and I asked Ed if he heard dat sperit? He said 'Yes" and I told him by the 'turnel [??] God I did, too.

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“Another time over on Bluff Creek in Mississippi, I wuz agoin' goin' up one trail-like road one night wid another man, and we had to pass an a old cemetery, and he had he'd been teasin' me 'bout ghosts and hants g'osts and' h'ants , when all [of?] a sudden we heard dis sound like de wind blowin' through the grass. We had to pass one more grave that dat was by itself up the de road from the de cemetery, and jes ' before 'fore gettin' there dere we had to pass a big crepe crape myrtle tree, when all of a sudden this ghost dis g'ost come right through that crepe myrtle dat tree and an' went ahead 'head of us, makin' a noise jes ' like de wind. I told that dat man to let it go, for I guess it was going to the de grave ahead of us, and I sho' didn't want to interfere wid it. It sho' scared us both, but I knowed if 7 we trusted God it couldn't hurt us. I'se I's always trusted him, and you see I'm still here.

“I come from a family of long livers anyhow,” my [?] ma lived to ninety-nine years old and my grandparents grandfolks lived nearly dat long, too, so you see I'se I's liable to be here sometime yet [yat?] , but I hopes not, for I'm I's weak and an' weary of dis sinful world.

“ Most Mos all dis younger generation is agin me 'cause I tells dem of dere sinful ways. But I'se gona I's go'na fight for de lord as long as I kin.” [?] [?]